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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1757
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 5711
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 003080

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: THAI QUEEN SHOWS SUPPORT FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT
PROTESTS, PRO-GOVERNMENT "RED" TEAM REEMERGES

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. James F. Entwistle, reason: 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (C) Bangkok was calm October 14 as as Queen Sirikit sent the strongest public signal to date of her support for the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) when she presided over the October 13 funeral ceremony of an anti-government protestor, Angkhana Radappanyawut. Shortly after the funeral concluded, leading Thai forensics expert Porntip Rojanasunan announced that her investigation indicated Angkhana died after being hit in the chest by a Chinese tear gas grenade containing a small amount of RDX explosive. Having postponed an October 13 demonstration outside Bangkok police headquarters, PAD's plan for the immediate future remains unclear. After a five week absence, the red-clad pro-government "United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship" (UDD) reemerged with large, peaceful rallies in Bangkok October 11-14. Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat said on October 13, after an audience with the King, that he planned neither to resign nor to dissolve the House of Representatives.

2. (C) Comment: The PAD postponement of its planned October 13 demonstration at police headquarters provided temporary breathing space for several days, but there is no indication it has abandoned its "final battle" approach to the political conflict. We remain concerned that, if the PAD does conduct a rally later in the week at national police headquarters, it may turn violent. Once the Queen signaled her willingness to preside over the cremation ceremony of Angkhana, an extraordinarily unusual development, the PAD had every incentive to let that event dominate the news cycle, which strengthened the PAD's claim to be supporting (and supported by) palace elements. In overtly embracing the PAD, the Queen risks politicizing the monarchy in a manner which may prove especially unwise at a time when challenges associated with royal succession are looming. End Summary and Comment.

QUEEN PRESIDES OVER FUNERAL

3. (C) Queen Sirikit publicly signaled strong support for the

PAD on October 13, when she took the extraordinary step of presiding over the cremation ceremony of commoner Angkhana Radappanyawut, with Princess Chulabhorn, Supreme Commander Songkitti Jakkabat, Army Commander Anupong Paojinda, Privy Councilors, PAD leaders and opposition Democrat Party leaders in attendance. Angkhana was one of two anti-government protestors killed on October 7; the Queen almost never attends funerals of commoners unless they have rendered extraordinary services to the monarchy. Media outlets quoted Angkhana's father claiming that the Queen had told him his late daughter had supported the Thai nation and the monarchy.

14. (SBU) Shortly after the conclusion of the ceremony, Thailand's leading forensics expert, Porntip Rojanasunan, went on TV to discuss her findings regarding the circumstances of Angkhana's death outside the Metropolitan Police Headquarters late October 7. After test-firing the type of Chinese tear gas canister used by police, discovering that the canisters contained the explosive RDX, and examining photos of Angkhana's wounds, Porntip concluded that Angkhana died from being hit squarely in the chest with a tear gas canister just before it exploded. Others had speculated that Angkhana was carrying an explosive device that detonated.

SOMCHAI APPEALS TO NATION, PAD POSTPONES

15. (U) PM Somchai made a short televised appeal to the nation late October 12. He expressed regret for the violence on October 7, restated his intent to form two committees to examine the causes of violence and compensate victims, called on the country to unify in advance of a series of important upcoming events--the mid-November funeral rites of Princess Gallyani; the early December birthday of King Bhumibol; and

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the mid-December ASEAN summits--and asked the PAD to vacate the Government House compound and the streets.

16. (SBU) Shortly after Somchai's address concluded, PAD leaders announced a postponement of their scheduled demonstration outside of the police headquarters the morning of October 13. PAD co-leader Sondhi Limthongkul said his decision was motivated by the desire to focus public attention on the funeral ceremonies for Angkhana and another PAD supporter who died after the October 7 clash. A leading PAD figure told us on October 14 that PAD had not yet decided whether to proceed with a demonstration at the police headquarters, which had been tentatively rescheduled for October 15.

UDD RETURNS

17. (SBU) After a five week absence in the wake of the violent September 2 clash with the PAD which left one of its supporters dead, the red-clad, pro-government UDD reemerged the evening of October 11 with a rally of more than 10,000 at Bangkok's Muong Thong Thani Arena, followed by a three day rally at Bangkok's royal grounds (Sanam Luang). The four original UDD leaders from 2006 led the rally, including Jakrapob Penkair, the former member of Samak Sundaravej's cabinet who resigned after being charged with lese majeste. Another UDD leader, Veera Musikapong, reiterated publicly what he had told us privately in early September in the wake of the September 2 violence: the UDD aimed to show it was more peaceful and law-abiding, and could rally a larger group publicly, than the PAD. Another UDD figure told us October 14 that UDD would conclude its rally but would be ready to mobilize for further protests in the event of a military coup.

18. (C) In addition to the alternative color scheme (red, instead of yellow, the color of the King), the UDD has consciously adopted several other symbols putting itself at odds with both the PAD and the current monarchy. The PAD uses plastic hand clappers at its rally; the UDD unveiled a

red "foot clapper" at its rally (showing the sole of one's foot is taken as a sign of disrespect in Thai culture). In response to the PAD's paramilitary, black-clad Sri Vichaya warriors, the UDD unveiled its own black-clad guard force, self-styled "King Taksin warriors." (note: King Taksin was the final monarch prior to the establishment of the current Chakri dynasty, and was murdered in 1782 by his own ministers).

PRIME MINISTER HAS ROYAL AUDIENCE

19. (SBU) King Bhumibol received Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat for an audience in Hua Hin on October 13. After the audience, Somchai told the press that he had provided the King with a routine update, and that he (Somchai) planned neither to resign nor to dissolve the House of Representatives.
ENTWISTLE